

## REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

The consultation report form is intended to record the outcomes of the consultation and assist in preparing the National Commitment Statement. Please complete the form on the TES portal for tracking by 15 August 2022.

### 1 - TES NATIONAL CONSULTATION PROCESS

**Convenor's Name:** Mr. Artur Martirosyan

**Number of consultations (if more than one consultation takes place):** 1 consultation on education, 5 consultations on youth

#### **Basic information on all the consultation(s) convened**

Date(s) 14 July, 2022 (National Consultation), 25th of July, (Youth discussion, Yerevan), 26th of July, (Youth discussion, Armavir), 26th of July, (Youth discussion, Ejmiatsin), 27th of July, (Youth discussion, Gyumri), 29th of July, (Youth discussion, Spitak)

**Titles:** 1 National Consultation on Education, 5 regional discussions on youth

**Types:** 1 national, 5 regional

**Number of Participants for each consultation:** Education - 96, Youth - 80

**Language used:** Armenian (simultaneous translation to English)

**Total number of participants:** 176

**Age Range of Participants: (insert number)**

72	17
8	18 - 29
	30 -59
	60+

**Gender Participants: (insert number)**

Male – 56

Female – 120

Prefer not to say

**Number of Participants from each Sector: (insert number)**

Education - 53

Child Protection - 4

Health - 1

Labor - 5

Environment - 8

Finance - 2

Nutrition - 3

Communication - 1

Information Technology - 4

Social Protection - 3

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene - 4

Other -Youth

**Number of participants from each Stakeholder Group: (insert number)**

- Teachers, educators, facilitators, and professors - 21

- Youth and students (including children and adolescents) - 75

- School leaders (e.g., from UNESCO [ASPnet school network](#)) - 10

- City and local government representatives - 1
- Parents and caregivers - 5
- Small/medium enterprises/unions - 2
- Large national businesses - 0
- Members of Parliament - 0
- Multi-national corporations - 0
- Local authorities - 0
- Government and national institutions - 25
- Public Servants - 25
- Regional economic community - 0
- United Nations Organizations - 5
- Local Non-Governmental Organizations - 13
- International and/or Regional financial institutions - 6
- International Non-Governmental Organizations - 20
- Indigenous people and community leaders - 0
- Scientific community, academic, universities and research institutes - 8
- Media - 1

## 2. PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

**How did you organize the consultation to ensure the following principles of national consultations?**

### **- A whole-of-government approach**

All major state institutions that have a central role in the issues discussed were engaged in the National Consultation. Namely, the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports, the Ministry of Healthcare, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of High Tech Industry, were represented. The combination of the representatives of

various state institutions was developed in a way to ensure their engagement in all working groups which would provide institutional input during the discussions.

### **- Inclusion and equality**

The questionnaires developed for the national consultations and the regional discussions were designed in a way to cover topics related to inclusion and equality. Moreover, the combination of key components and thematic action tracks were automatically revealing issues related to addressing the needs of various stakeholder groups. The need for engaging all necessary stakeholder groups in the National Consultation was an essential part of the methodology, thus while developing the list of participants a special attention was paid on making sure that various positions and approaches are represented. In this regard, the active engagement of the civil society helped to ensure representation of various groups and constituencies in the Consultation: youth, education, culture, protection of the rights of the disabled people, social support and other sectors were represented via engagement of the CSOs. Engagement of teachers and educators from various schools and VET institutions ensured representation of the respective positions in the discussions.

### **- Focusing on youth as ‘agents of change’**

5 regional events with a specific focus on youth with engagement of 80 participants were organized. These events were important in terms of provision of a targeted feedback focusing on youth-specific issues and proposing various solutions on youth engagement, as well as outlining the perspectives of young people from various regions of Armenia. Thanks to the regional youth discussions defining the needs of young people necessary to become active citizens and change makers became possible. Additionally, the spectrum of questions for the National Consultation was designed in a way to keep the participation and engagement of young people in the focus, providing information on the matter from various perspectives.

### **- Scientific community, academic, universities and research institutes**

Engagement of the expert community, academic and scientific sector representatives was another important focus of the National Consultations. Representatives of 7 major HEIs of Armenia including Yerevan State University and Yerevan State Pedagogical University were represented, moreover representatives for think tanks and research entities focusing on youth and education were engaged. Experts in spheres of education management, continuous education, non-formal education, experts engaged in development of various legal and policy documents related to youth and education were engaged.

**What was/were the main area(s) of focus of the national consultation(s), based on the TES five thematic action tracks\* and the issues outlined in the Discussion Papers and the Futures of Education Briefing Notes?**

The structure of the National Consultation and regional Youth discussions was designed in a way to cover all five action tracks with an attempt to identify major issues, evaluate available resources and define major action points and responsible institutions to undertake these actions. This approach has helped the organizers to ensure comprehensive discussion of 5 thematic action tracks in their entire diversity throughout the National Consultation and specific focus on the three action tracks: Inclusive, equitable, safe and healthy schools, Learning and skills for life, work and sustainable development, Digital learning and transformation.

The overall conversation flow has illustrated that the participants discuss the needs, challenges and particularly the actions needed, on a more general level with no particularization neither project-wise, nor in terms of clearly defining the “strategic who” of the action. There is lack of clarity in particular actions and division of responsibilities. This illustrates the need to go far beyond general strategic conversations and be more focused on result oriented actions. Another interesting aspect revealed during the discussions was the need to talk and express themselves among the participants of the consultation. These two symptoms illustrate that there is a need for a more systematic and periodic communication focused on particular needs and activities with engagement of the major stakeholders and clear distribution of roles and responsibilities. Moreover, these conversations must lead to action, they should include planning components followed by implementation and the participants should bear the ownership of the process not only on the level of providing the decision makers with inputs, or articulating the needs, but engaging throughout the entire process. The conversation has revealed that the system of education is in a need of comprehensive, systemic and painful transformation which relates all major components of the education including the content of education, the teaching methods, the integration of the system of education with other components of the environment including economy, healthcare, social sector, culture, etc., improvement of the teaching infrastructure, configuring formal and non-formal education and many other issues.

It is worth mentioning that school education was the major topic of discussions which is quite illustrative and can be explained by the fact that school education sets the basis and preconditions for professional education and thus, all the issues and problems that appear on that stage are conditioning the overall context of further stages of education. This does not mean that other stages of education shall not become part of the transformative reform, even more the reform must be comprehensive and address pre-school, primary, secondary, hi school, vocational and higher education as well as various components of non-formal education in its entire interconnected logy, contributing to each other and allowing to maximize the effect of providing each and every citizen with knowledge and skills necessary to effectively respond to the challenges of the present and the future.

The analysis of the focus group discussions has resulted in the emergence of eight thematic networks, which are highlighted below. The thematic networks can be divided into two groups: The consequences of the pandemic on education, and the identification of solutions for

ameliorating the obstacles. Finally, most frequent codes of the analysis are presented in the text below.

The pandemic crisis of 2020 had a significant impact on education in Armenia. Though the developments created both opportunities and challenges the latter greatly outweigh the opportunities. The scope of these opportunities encapsulates new approaches in setting up learning processes, where the whole scale use of ICT and IT came to replace that of traditional procedures. However, the transition has not been smooth and as a result a set of defiance has emerged.

In general, these problems might be divided into learning and non-learning aspects. In particular, on one hand the ineffectiveness of on-line teaching has caused functional illiteracy among low graders, and on the other hand the aftermath of the pandemic has resulted in lay-offs among personnel, increase of red tape, emergence of psychological issues and cyber bullying. Apart from the lack of tools necessary for online education among the students, the lack of digital knowledge among the teaching staff, the problems related to the methodology of online education became central. In this regard, is a need for a thorough expert analysis of the methods of online, offline and combined education and how they can be transferred to the teachers.

The power of tradition is one of the main constraints that curbed the way for ameliorating the negative consequences of the pandemic. Particularly, people were not ready for the changes. In this regard, command of ICT, IT and development of the soft skills are essential to tackle the recent challenges. It has been derived that knowledge of English is a prerequisite for using technologies. Besides, attainable and available information access and instructions are needed both for teachers and students. Though the tools are available for the stakeholders, the latter groups either have difficulties in using them or are reluctant to master their command skills. Yet another vacuum that needs to be filled is the acquisition of soft skills. Classroom management and student engagement competencies are of utmost importance here. Leadership, management, networking, crisis management, group working skills are also important to be developed in order to resist the obstacles.

In a nutshell, on-line learning is not operating adequately and the vulnerable groups are the most severely affected. The circumstances might be attributed to a large scope of factors, which can be grouped in the following clusters: problems of educational content, methodological issues, lack of learning tools and learning materials, and unavailability of electronic devices and the internet. The core issues regarding the first category is the lack of Armenian content and the fact that on-line resources are not being regularly updated. As regards the methodological obstacles, then it should be clarified that on-line learning mechanisms are not equipped with methodological bases, quality assurance and grading/evaluating tools are missing. Similarly, both on-line teaching tools for teachers and on-line learning tools for students are missing as well, let alone the problems connected with the access to learning materials. Finally, the fact that teachers and

the main part of students were not equipped with electronic devices had created inequality in education. The lack of internet access was another challenge in terms of resource availability. It should also be mentioned that the unexpected necessity of online education has revealed the problems related to both the content of education and the teaching methods. The teachers had serious problems in terms of adapting the content of education to the new online format. Often the replication of the classroom education took place with mechanical application of simple online communication software. The lack of knowledge of online educational tools resulted in problems in presenting the content to students properly. This caused a big variety of problems, among which timing, evaluation, attention, follow up, ethical and many others can be mentioned.

One of the central issues that arose during the discussion of the teaching process as such, related to the methodological aspects. There was a clear indication of a fundamental issue of education not responding to the needs and the challenges of the outer world, not preparing for the future and not knowing or being able to predict what the future is going to look like. Along with the decrease in the motivation to study among the youth there is also a decrease of motivation to teach among the teachers. Here, apart from the reasons mentioned above the socio-economic issues are in place and the lack of career development perspectives particularly in the regions.

The methodological issues are also caused by the teaching tradition in Armenia developed throughout the past decades and focused on the principle of memorization and not analysis, thus the critical thinking component and as a consequence the entire set of individual and collective thinking skills. Another issue related to the tradition of teaching methods relates to the archaic Soviet perception of the aims of educational process developed within the logic of industrial totalitarian empire which in its philosophy denies horizontal connections and interdisciplinary approach as such. This brings a somewhat natural systemic resistance as well as a generational clash between the teaching staff that has inherited the old approach and the new generation of students that at least intuitively feels the need for more project and process based approaches in education. In this regard it is quite natural that the young participants of the consultations raise the issue of the necessity to reform the teaching methods and mention the lack of professional orientation component at schools. This issue is conditioned by the major discrepancy between the knowledge and skills proposed by formal education and the actual needs of an individual to adapt to the requirements and challenges of the modern world. Here the need for strong institutional connections within the educational system, as well as between the education, research and economy becomes crucial.

### **What are the main outcomes regarding the four key components\* of the national consultation(s)?**

While discussing the possible action points and solutions within the context of the four key components of the NC the following approaches and solutions were discussed:

While speaking about the need to transform the system of education the major principles are defined, the necessity of transition is understood, but the effective road map for achieving the transformation is not clear for many stakeholders and not synchronized. This has two major reasons: lack of sustainable communication and need to develop the human capital primarily among the teachers and educational managers on all levels. Thus, in order to ensure effective and smooth reform process, there is a need for a clearly defined set of actions led by the state as a primary responsible and with active and constructive engagement of other stakeholders including the educational institutions, the civil society, the private sector, the parent community and of course the students themselves. The importance of state coordination in the educational environment is largely highlighted. In particular, the state has to prioritize targets in order to initiate necessary steps, such as combating functional illiteracy. Yet another important sphere of involvement is to organize teacher training and monitoring. These include revisiting professional criteria for teachers, as well as identifying criteria while choosing teacher training organizations, which should also be transparent. Quality assurance mechanisms for teacher training organization and monitoring procedures should also be revisited. Besides, the state should initiate actions to regulate on-line teaching processes by law, which is currently missing.

Another essential precondition for having quality education in post-COVID Armenia is to have data driven policies and form strategies for reaching the goal. For implementing data driven policies, it is vital to have statistics on education. Afterwards strategies should be formed based on the analysis of data, rather than repeating that of international analogues, which might not be effectively applicable in Armenia. The need for setting strategies also refers to e-learning. Education related short- and long-term targets should be made publicly available. Finally, for having the complete picture of education in Armenia the need assessment of teachers and resource mapping should be done as well.

The importance of the data driven policies and actions is primarily conditioned by the need of defining clear and adequate deliverables, defining the measurement tools and means of verification. Proper organization of the process with active engagement of the wide group of stakeholders will on one hand make the process transparent and accountable, and on another hand will expand the circle of ownership of the reform process.

It is important to understand that state involvement is not sufficient for the betterment of quality education and for effective implementation of a systemic and transforming educational reform. Engagement of all related parties is highly important. This can be achieved by promoting public-private partnership, where different businesses might participate in educational processes. Likewise, the cooperation between all the parties involved in the processes is desirable as well. In particular, on one hand teachers need to make parents participate in teaching processes, on the other hand they have to communicate with students adequately for the same reason. Both teachers and schools have to initiate group works and share their experience to combat obstacles. In the same way, the cooperation between the main actors, involving National Center of

Educational Technologies, Higher Educational Institutions, NCEDI foundation, VET institutions are also rather important. The intensification of communication and cooperation will lead to an important cultural transformation, ensuring of a student-centered education, promoting rights based approach in organizing the educational process, which will also improve the culture of communication in the teacher-student-parent triangle.

From the viewpoint of cooperation and effective actor involvement human resource engagement and human capital development are much needed elements. This primarily relates to the educational management and teaching staff. The capacity development needs are complex and include professional growth, enrichment of the arsenal of methodological instruments, as well as development of various soft skills. The development of the human capital is strongly connected with the environment within the teachers' community. There is a need to promote intensive professional communication and exchange, as well as healthy and constructive competition. To ensure effective environment there is a need to promote more creative and organizational efforts within the schools, which means that conglomerates of schools and educational content and methodology developers can exercise this or that teaching approach and methodological principles and compete with each other under the thorough monitoring of the state institutions responsible for the process. There is also a need for human resource development plan in the sphere of education that can be developed with engagement of wide spectrum of stakeholders.

There is a lack of EdTech or institutional technology specialists, and a need for the expertise of international organizations, think tanks and experts. The assistant is mostly needed in monitoring. It is also important to state that expertise is both needed in quality and quantity. As regards to human capital development, the competencies of teachers should be increased. Additionally, there is a need for quality digital content in Armenian that would help the teaching staff in organizing the educational process. This can be achieved via initiating digitalization projects coordinated by the respective state institutions and implemented by HEIs, research entities and other relevant institutions.

The identified issues in education are not solely attributable to the consequences of pandemic and they need to be tackled as well. The core problems relate to the fact that educational content does not match the current needs of the labor market and that the education cannot be considered as student-centric. One of the potential solutions is the change of educational model that will combine various approaches: project based learning, lifelong learning, informal education, personalized learning, hybrid solution (i.e. virtual laboratories) and the transformation of the curricula with a particular emphasis on critical thinking, reflection, broadmindedness. The other identified limitations refer to the lack or misuse of infrastructure. And lastly the lack of efficient financing is another obstacle. In particular diversification of financial mechanisms and additional resource acquisition is needed. While speaking about the need to diversify the financing of education one needs to understand that this relates not only to the sources of funding but also to the funding schemes, mechanisms and recipients. Moreover, the entire logic of planning,

spending and reporting the expenses shall be thoroughly reviewed. This can be achieved via establishment of various funding schemes by the MoESC, with engagement of other donors and sponsors.